

News Release



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Railroad Museum to Debut Enticing New Exhibit: “Pick Me! Fruit Crate Art & the California Dream” *Exhibit to Showcase More than 80 Visually Inspiring Fruit Crate Labels Opening March 4*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The California State Railroad Museum will debut an exciting new exhibit titled “Pick Me! Fruit Crate Art & the California Dream” on Friday, March 4. More than 80 iconic fruit crate art labels from the 1880s through the early 1950s will be on display as part of this visually powerful new exhibit. Chosen from the Museum’s collection and from the California State Library, the striking crate labels portray vibrant hues and whimsical motifs that romanticized life in the Golden State and served as an alluring call to “Go West.”

Beginning in the 1840s, early railroads experimented with shipments of perishables cooled by ice. In the decades after 1869, when the Transcontinental Railroad connected West with East, techniques for cooling insulated wooden railroad cars—using ice—were perfected. Suddenly a vast new market opened up for California’s farmers. As the primary means of transport, the railroad was instrumental in the early expansion and success of the Golden State’s agriculture industry. But along with sharing luscious fresh produce with new markets, these refrigerated cars (known as “reefers” in railroad slang) inadvertently delivered something more to a wider population—the California Dream.

Filled with fresh California produce, wooden shipping crates were identified on their exteriors by artistically and fantastically designed labels. Dripping with color, these labels communicated the powerful allure of the Golden State. Many labels depicted verdant fields and idyllic pastoral scenes, subtly suggesting that California was a magical place – a place where it was always sunny and the grass was somehow greener. Visitors to the new “Pick Me!” exhibit will enjoy seeing the impressive label collection and exploring how fruit crate art developed over time as a graphic art form, a printing technique and a means of marketing. Additionally, this exhibit will explore the mechanics of how ice was packed into the top hatch of each “reefer” car to keep it cool in this era before mechanical refrigeration. Using magnetic cut-outs of typical label design elements, children and adults alike will also have a hands-on opportunity to design a label of their own and are encouraged to bring a camera to capture their creations.

Located inside the Museum’s restored 1924 Fruit Growers Express Refrigerator Car and along its re-created loading dock/icing station, “Pick Me! Fruit Crate Art & the California Dream” will remain on display through March 30, 2012. For more, please visit www.csrmf.org or call (916) 445-6645.

About the California State Railroad Museum

Operated by California State Parks with financial assistance from the non-profit California State Railroad Museum Foundation, the California State Railroad Museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. Widely regarded as North America’s finest and most popular railroad museum, the complex of facilities includes the 100,000-square foot Railroad History Museum plus the reconstructed Central Pacific Railroad Passenger Station and Freight Depot, 1849 Eagle Theatre, and Big Four and Dingley Spice Mill commercial buildings in Old Sacramento. For 24-hour information, visit www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org or call (916) 445-6645.

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